



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **TRANSITION TEAM TRAINING BRINGS IRAQ TO KANSAS**

By Jennifer Thacker  
Task Force Dagger PA

The temperature soared to over one hundred degrees and the summer sun beat down on the earth scorching the villagers, the buildings and the team of Soldiers patrolling on the nearby dirt road. The scene could have been taking place in Iraq rather than the simulated village of Al Hawaej at Fort Riley. That was exactly the point of the exercise.

The Military Transition Team patrolled the Al Hawaej and conducted building searches as part of the theater immersion training given by the 2nd Brigade, 91st Division (Training Support) from Fort Carson, Colo.

"The main objective of the exercise is for the teams to understand moving in an urban environment, and entering and clearing a building with civilians and insurgents," said Capt. Cody Beck, the officer in charge of the exercise.

Beck and his instructors have all spent time in Iraq. "We've walked the patrols and dealt with the Iraqi Army as well as civilians on the battlefield," he said. "We try to create the most realistic training."

During the exercise, teams were required to conduct a patrol through the village and search all buildings. Once they entered a building, the Soldiers had to clear all rooms, stairways, hallways, floors and balconies.

"Most Iraqi houses have furniture, food and trash all over the place. What Soldiers need to understand is how all of that is going to affect their mission," Beck said. "It's going to affect entering the house and dealing with the civilians and insurgents. There is also a lot of small arms fire that comes from balconies because insurgents can see Soldiers coming up the roads," he said.

As the Soldiers entered the town they encountered contracted role players. The role-players help Soldiers learn to deal not only with Iraqi civilians, but with insurgents as well. The MiTT's tough job is determining who is a threat and who is not.

According to Beck, “the toughest job for a Soldier is to be able to separate a combatant from a non-combatant. It’s something you can’t write a manual about.” Beck added that these skills are developed using instinct and by continuous training and practice. It is important that Soldiers learn “how to deal with civilians and insurgents using interpreters and questioning to be able to rout out the enemies,” he said.

After clearing and securing the buildings and the village, the Soldiers conducted an after action review to discuss what they did well and what they need to work on.

“It was a good experience and great training for any Soldier to go through,” said Sgt. Michael Lewis, one of the trainees. “This is as close as it is going to get to the real thing. The more and more we go over this the better and better we get. If this is what we have to do to get Soldiers home then I am willing to do this over and over again.”

“Building relationships with our Iraqi counterparts while in Iraq is the most important thing we are going to do,” said Maj. Steven Carroll, transition team leader. “Running realistic training like this and running into Iraqi role players is key.”

Carroll was pleased with the accomplishments of his team following the village scenario. “Our interaction with the civilians on the battlefield is exactly where it should be,” he said.

Building clearing was the first step in collective training for the squads and teams working together as a cohesive unit, Beck said.

The Soldiers will be able to put their team building skills to the test when they incorporate all blocks of their training into a three-day mission readiness exercise at the conclusion of the training cycle.

Beck said this training “is just a small but important piece of a much bigger operation.”